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***MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force Chair Phil Isenberg
Announces Statewide Interests Group***

Chair Isenberg welcomes members, offers thanks for commitment and participation

SACRAMENTO – California Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) Blue Ribbon Task Force Chair Phil Isenberg today announced the selection of 19 members and 8 alternates to the MLPA Statewide Interests Group. This group will advise the task force and professional staff to the initiative on the overall process to develop a draft master plan framework and network of marine protected areas along the California coast.

"This group represents a wide range of perspectives and will provide a valuable mechanism to enhance communication with stakeholders about the MLPA process," said Isenberg. "This group has been assembled to help advise the task force on process issues and to help us get the word out to ensure that different viewpoints are being reached," he added.

All members of the Statewide Interests Group were nominated by various interests involved in the MLPA process. The group will not vote or otherwise take formal positions on any procedural or substantive issues, but instead will alert the task force to issues and opportunities that may improve public involvement in the process. The first meeting of the group was held yesterday, where nearly 100% participation was achieved.

Executive Director John Kirlin said, "This is an outstanding group of stakeholder representatives who will enhance the progress of the MLPA Initiative, as evidenced by the level of active participation we saw yesterday."

The MLPA Initiative depends on the active involvement of stakeholders and the general public to succeed. Various opportunities are available for such involvement, including meetings of the task force and a science advisory team that will be open to the public.

This initiative is possible through the efforts of private and government partners who are providing funding and in-kind services. These include: the California Resources Agency, California Department of Fish and Game, Resources Legacy Fund Foundation, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and MPA Science Institute of the National Marine Protected Areas Center.

The California Marine Life Protection Act Statewide Interests Group members:

Carol Abella, California Marine Affairs and Navigation Conference

Dan Berman, Marine Interests Group of San Luis Obispo

Steve Campi, Central California Council of Diving Clubs

Don Canestro, UC Santa Barbara Natural Reserve

Kevin B. Cooper, San Diego Freedivers (alternate for Ken Kurtis)

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Eric Endersby, California Association of Harbor Masters and Port Captains (alternate for Steve Scheiblauber)

Dr. Ronald Fritzsche, Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District

Karen Garrison, Natural Resources Defense Council

Vern Goerhing, California Fisheries Coalition

Zeke Grader, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations

Joel Greenberg, Recreational Fishing Alliance

Nancy Hastings, Surfrider Foundation (alternate for Linda Sheehan)

Pam Heatherington, Marine Interests Group of San Luis Obispo (alternate for Dan Berman)

Bill G. James, commercial nearshore fisherman

Ken Kurtis, Reef Seekers Dive Co.

Roberta L. Larson, California Association of Sanitation Agencies

Dr. James Liu, United Pier and Shore Anglers of California (alternate for Tom Raftican)

Kevin McDonnell, K. McDonnell Photography (alternate for Jesús Ruiz)

Corrine Monroe, Aquarium of the Pacific

Mike Osmond, World Wildlife Fund

Tom Raftican, United Anglers of Southern California

Mike Ricketts, commercial fisherman (alternate for Zeke Grader)

Jesús Ruiz, YMCA SCUBA Program

Steve Scheiblauber, California Association of Harbor Masters and Port Captains

Linda Sheehan, California Coastkeeper Alliance

Ben Sleeter, Coastside Fishing Club

David J. Whittington, Central California Council of Diving Clubs (alternate for Steve Campi)

For more information about the MLPA Initiative, please visit the Department of Fish and Game's MLPA Initiative website at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mrd/mlpa>.